4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

[P. 446]

CULTS OF THE DEAD AMONG THE NĀYARS

By E. Kathleen Gough

IN this paper I shall attempt both a sociological and a psychological analysis of Nāyar cults of the dead. That is to say, I shall try to relate the role-structure and social functions of the cults to those of legal and economic institutions, and to relate the emotional content of the cults to that of certain relationships among the living.

The Nāyars[1] are a high, matrilineal caste of landholders and salaried workers. Some four to seven matrilineal lineages of commoner Nāyars traditionally occupied the high caste area of a village. They served a Nāyar or Nambūdiri Brahman village headman, and had authority over tenants, artisans, and serfs of lower caste. The lineage was exogamous, had a depth of about ten to fifteen generations and was concerned in village government. But the more significant economic unit was a lineage segment (*taravād*), whose members jointly owned property including an ancestral house. The eldest man of this group was its legal guardian (*kāranavan*).

Before British rule began in 1792, the Malabar Coast comprised a number of kingdoms. I am concerned with Nāyars of villages in the former Cochin kingdom, in the center of the coast, and with those of villages in the former Kottayam kingdom in the north.

In Cochin, the country was relatively flat, fertile, and densely populated. The Nāyars were the professional military caste. For a part of each year they tended to be absent from the village in military training or wa[illegible]omen remained on their ancestral estates under the legal guardianship of the *kāranavan* and were maintained by the work of tenants and serfs. Probably largely as a result of the relatively mobile military occupation of the men, plural marital unions were customary. A woman might have six or eight husbands of her own or a higher subcaste, and a man, any number of Nāyar wives of his own or a lower subcaste. Residence was duolocal: spouses lived separately in their natal homes and a husband visited his wife in her home at night. Exact physiological paternity was, clearly, often unknown, and in any case a man had no rights in nor obligations to his children. Among Nāyars of this area, therefore, contrary to Murdock's generalization,[2] the elementary family was not institutionalized as a legal, economic or residential unit.

In Kottayam, the terrain was mountainous and jungly, the area more sparsely populated, and the kingdom less centralized. The Nāyars were cultivating landowners and only occasional warriors. The hilly and jungly terrain and the sparsity of population made duolocal residence impracticable. In most cases a man took his wife to live in his ancestral household in avunculocal residence, and children were brought up until adolescence in the houses of their fathers. There was some polygyny, but polyandry was forbidden. Fathers had morally though not legally recognized rights in and

4: Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

obligations to their children and a strong affective bond with them. The *Karanavān* of their lineage segment was however the authority in important matters.

Both in Kottayam and in Cochin, Nāyar women were occasionally married to men of the highest, patrilineal caste of Nambūdiri Brahmans. Children of such unions were Nāyars, and rules of ritual pollution maintained distance between them and their higher caste fathers. The Nambūdiri father might not eat with his wife and children, and might not touch them during the daytime while in a state of ritual purity. Only the eldest son of a Nambūdiri house might marry a Nambūdiri wife and beget children for his own family.

British rule brought about the collapse of the Nāyar armies early in the nineteenth century. Probably as a result of this change, plural marriages gradually died out in Cochin. The lineage system persisted with little change until the turn of the century, but in both areas the employment of men in professional and wage work led to the development of privately owned property in addition to property owned jointly by the matrilineal group. The Malabar Marriage Act of 1896 permitted men to register their marriages and gave the children of such marriages rights in half the personal property of the father after his death. During this century, the greatly increased employment of men in salaried work, and the development of cash-crop farming, have brought about a partial disintegration of the matrilineage, and have tended toward the emergence of the elementary family as an economic and legal unit. Under the pressure of these changes, laws[3] were passed in 1933 and 1937 which required all men to register their marriages, gave rights of maintenance to their wives and children, and provided that the whole of a man's personal property be inherited by his wife and children. In addition, the laws permitted, though they did not require, equal division of the matrilineal estate on a per caput basis[4] between all members. Although some traditional households remain, it has now become fairly customary for a woman and her immature children jointly to separate their shares of property from those of the rest of their matrilineal group, and to set up a new establishment with the woman's husband. He, in turn, may have abstracted his single share of property from that of his own matrilineal group. Sometimes, the husband himself provides a new house for his elementary family from his own share of property and his private earnings. Sometimes the new house is provided from the property of the wife and children, who receive their husband and father into it as a resident and wage earner. Sometimes husband and wife pool their property and set up a joint establishment.

Given the modern heterogeneity of legal, economic, and residential arrangements, and given also variations in education, interests, and life experience, it is not surprising that cults of the dead reveal differential rates of change. I shall be chiefly concerned with the traditional cults, although these persist without change in only a few of the more traditionally patterned households—actually, in fifteen percent of Nāyar households in one Cochin village, and in thirteen percent in one village in Kottayam.

The Nāyars participate in three distinguishable categories of cults of the dead. The first comprises a collective cult, by the matrilineal property group, of the ghosts of matrilineal forebears, which I call lineage ghosts. This cult is non-Sanskritic. The second category comprises various kinds of offerings by individuals to the spirits of dead kinsfolk at funerals or on the anniversaries of deaths. These cults are Sanskritic in origin. The third category comprises various cults of the ghosts of persons who were not members of the Nāyar's own lineage; I call these alien ghosts. These cults,

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

3. THE PEOPLE

The new State is one of the most densely populated in the whole of India, as well as one in which the percentage of literacy is highest. Unfortunately no current statistics are available, as Kerala is of very recent creation, but some idea can be gained from the fact that in the Ponani taluk of the former district of Malabar, according to the Madras Government Statistical Atlas, 1935, there were 626,500 inhabitants, or 1,471 per square mile. The rate of increase of the population is also very rapid: about 11% every ten years. The percentage of education is highest in Travancore, Cochin. In 1951, 53.8% were reported literate (*Census of India*, Vol. xii).

The people of Kerala are a very complex collection and it would be hopeless to attempt to give a full and detailed description of them. The reader is referred to those works on the subject which have already been published, the titles of some of which can be found in the Bibliography. In order to understand, however, the extraordinary way in which Kerala society is partitioned into a number of individual groups, and how each of these has its own particular customs and ways, as for instance polyandry, it is essential to give a general idea of the different castes and subcastes which compose the population, with a brief outline of their social organization and professional occupations.

Rather naturally, as is to be expected from the mythological version of the origins of the country mentioned above, the summit of the hierarchy is occupied by the *Nambudri Brahmin*. As W. Logan very aptly puts it in his *Malabar* (Madras, 1887): "His person is holy; his directions command, his movements are a procession; his meals nectar; he is the holiest of human beings, the representative of God on earth." (p. 127). There are eight subdivisions to the caste, some more holy than others, by reason of the occupations which they pursue. Other Brahmins in Malabar, who have come from outside and are thus somewhat looked down upon, are the Pattars, Embrandiris, Tamil and Konkani Brahmins.

Below this exalted strata of Kerala society come the *Ambalavasis* or temple attendants, of whom there exist roughly nine subdivisions. With them are to be classed the self-styled *Kshattriyas* and the *Samantans*, from whose ranks are drawn the flower of the former military aristocracy. The Malayalam maharajas and rajas all belong to this class, as does the family of the Zamorin of Calicut.

In immediate succession are the *Nayars*, Sudras by caste, descendants of those easterners whom Parasu Raman brought in for the protection

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

of the Brahmins. There are something like sixty four subdivisions of these people, from those ranking highest, in north Malabar, to the non-military, low caste ones of the south and of the Palghat taluk. Because of their very close relation to the Nambudri Brahmins which I shall describe below in detail, it can hardly be said that the Nayars are equal in caste to Sudras elsewhere in India. This is no doubt the reason for which, not only is their true position in the Hindu caste scale generally overlooked, but also why they themselves have a proud and self-assured bearing quite unlike that of the fourth and lowest caste in other parts of the country.

With the Nayars, the end of the list of caste Hindus is reached. Below come the *outcastes* who, despite their condition, are also graded in accordance with rank. First of these are the Tiyas. These bear different names in the various parts of Kerala, but there seems to be general agreement that they are really all one and the same people. Thus the name Tiya seems reserved for them in north Malabar with the exception perhaps of former north Cochin (Thiyyas); in Palghat, they are known as Iruvans, in south Malabar as Thandans and some as Irava-Panikkars; in south Cochin and north Travancore as Chovans, while in the rest of Travancore they go by the generic name of Iravas (sometimes spelt Izhuvas).

Next are the artisans or Kammalans of which there are properly only four main subdivisions. Their associates, also artisans and craftsmen, are roughly grouped into fourteen different communities.

The Kammalans are followed by another category composed of farm-hands, the Cherumas and Pulayas, and a dozen or so different kinds of aboriginals, jungle and hill folk who are rarely encountered on the coast or in the cultivated area, and have to be sought for in the foothills and jungles of the Western Ghats.

Non-Hindu inhabitants of Kerala include Moslems and Christians, of whom the greater number belong to the first of these two religious communities. They are both known locally as Mappillas, the first as Jonaka Mappillas and the others as Nasrani Mappillas. It is from this name, meaning "mother's son" or "bridegroom" or again "great child", that the more familiar *Mopla* for the Kerala Mohammedans has been coined. All are of the Sunni persuasion, while the Christians belong to a great number of varied denominations; some of them are Roman Catholic (the majority), others "Romo-Syrian" (Uniat), Orthodox Syrian, Malankara Syrian, Assyro-Chaldean (Nestorian), Mar Thomas, and of the Protestant United Church of south India.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 563 [795] There is a small community of Jews in Cochin, divided into White, Brown, and Black, the last named being the most numerous. Other Kerala residents are foreigners such as Canarese, Tamils, Arabs, and Europeans.

105 564 783 Untouchability has been made a penal offence by the present Indian Constitution and there is undoubtedly a tendency among the more enlightened in the country to combat its evils and attempt to eradicate it from modern Hindu society. On the other hand, the religious minded (and there are many) maintain that since the Constitution is a secular one and allows full freedom of religious belief and practice, the legislator cannot interfere in questions of caste and untouchability, as these have to do with the religious law and structure of India. The fact is that, today, untouchability is not what it was, but it cannot be said either that it has been done away with altogether. A visitor to Kerala is certainly immediately made aware of this, as many traditional views on what constitutes intercaste pollution and what does not are still very much in evidence. Thus, although a member of the artisan caste, a [784] Kammalan, perhaps no longer pollutes those above him in the hierarchy, [264] atmospherically, at twenty four feet as he used to do, it is nevertheless unthinkable that he should sit down to a meal of cooked rice with a [463] Nambudri, or even for that matter with a Nayar. The aboriginal Nay- [484] adis who still live off begging and hunting may possibly "come into [984] town" now and not have to keep off the roads for fear of polluting other castes merely by being seen within a distance of seventy four feet, but they are not for that admitted to a would-be reformed Indian community in which no distinctions of caste, creed and colour are made any longer; in fact, they themselves, probably out of some sort of perverse attachment to their powers of polluting, refuse to be rehabilitated – as has been attempted by the former government of Travancore – and prefer to carry on with their traditional way of life.

It can thus be safely said that pollution of the higher castes by the lower is very much believed in and guarded against, even in Kerala [841] today. Menstruating women, and also those who have given birth, are [846] still considered to be unclean for a period, varying with the people to whom they belong. And the various kin groups, of which every indiv- [614] idual is a member among the Hindus of Kerala, will equally be con- [846] sidered unclean and polluting for a certain amount of days – diminishing [965] in number in inverse proportion to the height of the caste – after a birth or a death has taken place.

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected Parent, or towards the higher casteman, was always shown in Kerala by not wearing anything in his presence above the waist, be one man or woman. Basically, this has changed but little, the Nambudri Brahmin always praying in his private temple with only a loin cloth on, the modern Tiya factory girl now removing the blouse which she has taken to wearing before some important personage of her kin group, so that her breasts are exposed. What is a less frequent sight nowadays is Nayar, Tiya or Kammalan women in the streets and on the roads without some covering over the upper parts of their bodies. Lower caste people, however, Cherumas, Pulayas and aboriginals, being less affected by progress, are still to be seen on the highways, their shapely bodies exposed from the waist upwards.

A striking phenomenon in Kerala is the coexistence, even today, of the two radically opposed systems of *marumakkathayam* (matriliny) and of *makkathayam* (patriliny). In the first, children are born into their mother's caste, while in the other they are born into their father's caste. Inheritance is through the mother's brother in the first instance, and through the father in the second. The matrilineal people are grouped in matrilineal clans called *tarawads*, of which the senior male member, the *karanavan*, is the recognized head; the patrilineal people have patrilineal clans called by the same name, *tarawad*, also with the senior male as the *karanavan*, but at the same time, they observe descent through the mother, and all are members of matrilineal descent groups known as *illams* or *kiriyams*. While castes and, strictly speaking, subcastes are in principle endogamous, clans and lineages are definitely exogamous, marriage being matrilocal in the case of matrilineal people and patrilocal in the case of patrilineal people.[1]

Of the high castes, only the Nambudri Brahmins are *makkathayam*. They have patrilineal *gothras* or lineages which are exogamous, and patrilineal clans like *tarawads* which they, however, call *illams*. In olden days, only the eldest son could contract a regular marriage within his caste, marriage being polygamous and patrilocal. The younger sons were either expected to live as *brahmacharyas* (bachelor religious devotees) or could cohabit with Nayar women in a form of union known as *sambandham* to which we shall revert in a moment. They were maintained by their own efforts (they generally became cooks) and by a meagre allowance from the family *illam*. This has now been changed by

[1] I continue to make use of the terms *matrilocal* and *patrilocal* here, rather than *uxorilocal* and *virilocal* as still being perfectly adequate as they were for Ceylon previously.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11

105 564 581 428 the Nambudri Act of 1933, the provisions of which are that younger Nambudris may marry women of their own caste and that the *illam* property can be divided, if they so wish, and inherited by these younger sons.

105 564 611 Others who observe *makkathayam* in Kerala are the south Malabar and north Cochin Thandans, the Kammalans and their associated fellow artisans and craftsmen, all the agrarian serfs and the aboriginals, the south Malabar Moslem Moplas, the Christians and the Jews.

Marumakkathayam, on the other hand, is practised by Kshattriyas, Samantans, Ambalavasis, Nayars, north Malabar Tiyas, south Travancore Iruvas and north Malabar as well as Laccadive Moplas. In the [428] case of the Mohammedans, a distinction should be made in matters of inheritance, family property (that is of the *tarawad*) being handed on through the female line alone, while self-acquisitions of the father are [492] [115] passed on directly to his male heirs. A visit to the Makhdun Tangal of Ponani, the senior Islamic religious authority in Kerala, which I made on the 24th of November, 1949, allowed me to confirm this. Originally from the Hedjaz, Sayed Mohammed Ben Mustafa Haidaros told me that this was an adaptation of Koranic law to the customs of the country and had been introduced many years back with the coming of his ancestors to the south-west coast of India.

105 564 [58] Marriage in Kerala is an arranged affair, parents or a close relative such as the maternal uncle, choosing a suitable partner for the child after the age of puberty. Once the two families involved have agreed as to what shall be paid in bride price and in dowry, the wedding is celebrated publicly with religious rites and with an appropriate display of festive spending. This is the general rule insofar as marriage within [588] the caste is concerned. Intercaste relations are, however, far from rare, and their existence has been regularized and institutionalized in a form of sexual union, mentioned above, and known as *sambandham*.

105 564 588 By this arrangement, which appears to conform to a general principle of hypergamy in Kerala, men of a higher caste are permitted to consort with women of a lower one, without incurring any of the obligations towards wife and children which they would have if they had been regularly wed. Greatly facilitating this is the fact that *sambandham* unions [428] usually take place with women of those people who follow *marumakkathayam*, for in this way, the offspring which they may have will belong to their caste and are cared for by and inherit from the maternal uncle.

Sambandham used to be the usual way in which younger Nambudri sons enjoyed the privilege of taking Nayar women to themselves and

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

having children by them. The latter were born into the Nayar caste, and to all practical purposes were untouchables for their fathers. But, in fact, Nayars thus procreated were perfectly conscious of the high caste blood which flowed in their veins and which made them only slightly less important than their exalted sires. A feeling of close relation to the Brahmins was thus definitely generated in them, giving them the self-assurance and self-assertion in public affairs that distinguishes them from their fellow Indians to this day. Others, and especially Arabs, have also contracted *sambandham* unions with the Nayar women of Malabar. Such unions are equally possible with *marumakkathayam* Tiya women, and between members of the same endogamous caste, when regular marriage is not possible.

Although it appears to be a very loose way of setting up a household (there is no other ceremony than the possible offering of a piece of cloth by the man to the woman, and the relation can be broken off informally at any time), in actual fact there were, and still are, very few cases of *sambandham* unions not lasting. The main drawback seems to have been the feeling of frustration in the male partner that he was unable to do anything for, or leave anything to, his children. British legislation attempted to remedy this state of affairs by the Malabar Marriage Act IV of 1896 which provided for such unions to be registered and stipulated that when they were, they would be looked upon as regular, legal marriages entitling the "wife" and children to maintenance by the "husband" and father, and to inheritance of half his self-acquired property should he die intestate. Inheritance from father to son in matrilineal families has since been further legalized by the Madras *Marumakkathayam* Act of 1933, but its provisions really apply more specifically to the regular marriages of the *marumakkathayam* practising people. In accordance with them, the property of the *tarawads* can now be divided up between the members, if they so wish.

A specific custom of Kerala, which has never failed to intrigue outsiders, is still very much observed today, namely the ceremony of *tali-kettu-kalyanam*, or of the tying of the *tali*. The latter is a small piece of gold, through which a thread has been strung, and which is tied round the neck of a girl before she attains maturity. Speculation as to what is the significance, origin and function of this ritual has been rife over the years, but at least opinions do not seem to differ on the point that it represents some form of symbolic marriage, preceding and perhaps preparing the way for a real one, or for entry into a *sambandham* union.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 588 Without going into the elaborate details of the occasion – which are very different, depending on the caste to which the girl belongs – it is enough to mention that its main item is the tying of the *tali* round the child's neck by someone who is, usually, a substitute bridegroom or *manavalan*. He should be of a higher or at least of the same caste, but he can also be an old, venerable person who has already done this, for instance, to the mother; sometimes the father takes the place of the *manavalan*, at others, it is the maternal uncle. That the mother herself should do so, is not unknown, and cases in which a clay figure has taken the place of a live person are on record. It has also become increasingly the custom to tie the *tali* on many girls at the same time (to save expense), and the tendency is to do the ceremony earlier and earlier in the children's lives.

After the man who ties the *tali* has fulfilled his task, he is not entitled to touch the girl. But shades of the times when he perhaps did do so still exist in the practice of his attempting to force the girl's bedchamber door, and of his being pelted by male onlookers belonging to her kin group, which does take place in some of the lower castes. In south Malabar, he is supposed to lie down under the same blanket with the girl for a few moments; among the Ambalavasis, and in some of the sub-castes, he may even spend three nights with her, but under the strict supervision of a chaperon put there to see that he does not touch her. In some cases, a form of divorce ends the ceremony before the *manavalan* is allowed to go. *Tali* tying is universal in Kerala, where it is not limited to the Hindus only, but is also practised by the Moslem Moplas and the Christians. [184]

105 581 588 833 It is interesting to note that the Portuguese traveller of the beginning of the sixteenth century, Duarte Barbosa, mentions that before a Nayar girl can be married, afer the *tali* has been tied on her, she should be deflowered before puberty, by some young man called in specially to do this from outside the caste, "for amongst themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women" (*The Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, p. 124). [183]

4. LAND-TENURE

105 241 Kerala is an agricultural state and everyone in it is either dependant on the produce of the land or linked to it by serving those who till the soil. The main crops are rice, coconuts, pepper and arecanuts, in that order of importance. Others, less important, are pulses, tapioca, spices such

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

as ginger and chillies, palm sugar, mangoes and bananas, betel leaf, tea and coffee. There are two main paddy (unhusked rice) harvests, the *kanni* in September and until November, depending on the type of rice planted and where, and the *magaram* in January and February.

A system of land-tenure and tenancy very special to Kerala is in existence in the state and its principal characteristics may be summed up as follows. Freehold land owners are called *janmis* and they are entitled to the absolute proprietorship of the land; they may mortgage or lease it to anyone as they wish. They are themselves nearly always non-cultivating. The first kind of tenure to which they may resort is called *kanam* and he who holds the lease is known as the *kanamdar*. This is a curious type of arrangement between landlord and tenant, by which the latter deposits a certain sum with the *janmi*, who in return pays interest on the amount as if it were a loan. The *kanamdar* then has the right to work the land or to lease it out to someone else. Every year he pays rent, an adjusted sum as the interest received from the landlord is deducted. Once every twelve years, a so-called renewal fee is paid by the tenant equal to three times the annual rent, and this gives him the right of possession for a further twelve years. Should he wish to give up the lease, the original deposit will be returned to him by the *janmi*. Most *kanamdars* sub-let and do not cultivate the land themselves.

The *kanamdars* often lease out the land as a *kanam* tenure too; but if they do not, it is as a *verumpattam* lease that they do so. This is a simple affair held for one year at a time, by which the tenant pays a fixed rent, or for several years, in which case it is called a customary *verumpattam*, and a renewal fee then becomes necessary, payable between five and twelve years. This lease is used only for paddy fields. Tenants of this category often sub-lease in the same way to others, who cultivate the land either themselves, or, more usually, employ labourers to do so. These labourers are of two kinds, free and tied. The former are coolies hiring themselves out for wages, while the others are agrarian farmhands who receive only board, lodging and clothing from the master responsible for them.

Customary *verumpattam* tenure of palm gardens for the production of coconuts or arecanuts is called *kuzhikanam*. The twelve year renewal fee is equal to the amount made on the garden in the last year and a half of the lease. Virgin and waste land, which nevertheless always has a *janmi* somewhere, is also let out on this type of tenure. The land owner has the right to evict the tenant if he has made no improvement of the land during his period of lease. House-sites occupied by tenants

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWII Kerala AWII

105 427 also have to be paid for, if they do not wish to be summarily evicted by a land owner who simply tolerates their settling down on his land. This is an ordinary lease, like a *verumpattam*, but is called a *kudiyiruppu*.

Tenants were formerly at a great disadvantage vis a vis the *janmi*, as the latter was at liberty to evict them on the slightest pretext. The Malabar Tenancy Act of 1930, by protecting the tenant, and restricting the cases in which eviction is possible (such as the non-payment of rent for instance, or necessity for the land owner to have some land to cultivate himself), especially of the *kanamdar*, has made this a thing of the [423] past. Dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of land ownership and [869] land-tenure continues, however, and the present tendency goes so far as to want to protect the interests of the *verumpattam* tenants to the detriment of the *kanamdars* and *janmis* and even, in the last resort as we shall see, of the landless, agrarian labourers who constitute the vast army of the Kerala agrarian proletariat.

105 923 564 It is difficult to generalize about the distribution of agricultural roles and interests among the various castes and communities in the state. Schematically, it can be said, however, that generally Nambudri Brahmins are *janmis*, since, as mythology has it, Parasu Raman gave them the land in perpetual enjoyment. Commenting on this, one of my interpreters assured me that this was not mere idle belief. It was a fact, giving the Brahmins an unequivocal title to the land, in spite of there being "no legal document" confirming them in their ownership. Many Nayars, including Kshattriyas such as the rajas of Cochin and Travancore, Samantans such as the Zamorin, and some Tiyas and Moplas, are also owners of large tracts of land.

105 564 [829] [893] [963] [864] *Kanamdars* are usually recruited among the well-to-do Nayars and Tiyas, but also among the big Mopla families. Other Moslems are *verumpattam* tenants, as are the majority of the Tiyas. These of course used to follow their traditional profession of *toddy* (fermented palm juice) tapping, but with the introduction of prohibition in the former Madras State, they have had to give it up, and mainly hire themselves out as labourers. Others who have always hired themselves out in this way, as an immemorial caste occupation, are the Cherumas and Pulayas, some free, but the vast majority tied to the land. Many Moplas, also, have no other means of subsistance.

105 563 463 954 The aboriginals in Kerala continue their wild life of beggars, food-gatherers or primitive forest-clearers and agriculturalists. Some are addicted to witchcraft as are also members of some of the artisan castes, and their activities give Kerala a strange, mysterious atmosphere of imponderable evil, the reputation of which is great outside its boundaries.